



Weekly Activity Update

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Solving the Poppy Problem

Alternative Livelihoods Symposium held in Washington

As part of the larger USG counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan, USAID's Alternative Livelihood programs have been operational since last December and have employed 26,000 to date in Nangarhar and Helmand provinces. Last week, USAID hosted an Alternative Livelihood Symposium to update USG staff on programs and how they fit into the larger counternarcotics strategy. Speakers included Roger Carlson, USAID Alternative Livelihoods Advisor, Doug Wankel, Director of Office of Drug Control, U.S. Embassy Kabul; and representatives of the main contractors implementing the Alternative Livelihoods Program. The symposium generated rigorous discussion and inquiries, highlighting the strength and importance of this program.

Alternative Livelihoods staff killed

On a sad note, Chemonics International, one of the three main contractors implementing the Alternative Livelihoods program, lost 9 staff in a series of fatal shootings. On May 18, five staff were killed; the following day four additional staff and two family members of the deceased were killed while transporting the victim's body to Pakistan for burial. USAID is working with Chemonics to assess the security situation and take steps to restart the program. USAID staff mourn their loss and wish to express our appreciation of their commitment to helping the people of Afghanistan.

Strengthening the Government

Launch of Four New Civic Education Programs

To prepare Afghans for the September parliamentary elections, USAID launched four new civic education programs. Two of the projects aim to better familiarize women on the election process: the funding of election content in eight consecutive editions of the popular women's magazine "Mursal" and the broadcasting of radio shows on elections and the democratic process produced by an Afghan women's mobile radio station. USAID is also funding the development and broadcast of nine radio quiz shows, testing listeners on the elections, the Constitution and Afghan history. Also, 12 radio dramas were produced and broadcast on 27 radio stations.

Lastly, a theatre campaign is working to ensure that Afghan citizens receive the information they need to complete registration and participate fully in the elections process. Theatre inaugurations were recently held in Kabul and Herat. Approximately 150 people attended the highly successful show in Herat, including senior members from the provincial government and Kabul University. The Kabul inauguration was attended by 50 people, including members of the press. Inaugurations are scheduled this week in Kandahar, Mazar, Jalalabad and Khost.



Mohammed Ackbar is one of 13,300 Afghans in Helmand who are employed daily on Alternative Livelihoods programs. These programs have been temporarily shut down while the security situation is under review after the recent killing of nine implementers.



Theatre performances to promote awareness of elections were critical in the presidential election. USAID recently kicked off a new tour of theatre programs for the parliamentary elections.

Economic Growth

Domestic revenue generation surpasses IMF target

Since 2003, USAID has been training and supporting staff of the Ministries of Finance, Commerce and Central Bank to increase revenue generation capacity in the Government of Afghanistan (GOA). The Ministry of Finance met a significant milestone by exceeding the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) total domestic revenue generation target of \$256 million for Afghan FY1383 (March 21, 2004 – March 20, 2005). As of May 16, approximately \$260.6 million has been collected for FY1383 and this figure could increase upon final reconciliation at the end of May. Total domestic revenue increased 20% from FY 1382. Customs revenue figures were also impressive – \$150.3 million was collected for

FY1383, an increase of 38.9% from FY 1382. Customs revenue served as 58% of the total domestic revenue collected, helping to sustain the funding of Government of Afghanistan (GOA) programs and services. USAID is helping the GOA achieve this goal by strengthening human capital at a ministerial level, streamlining the GOA's payment systems and establishing a modern tax system by implementing appropriate laws and regulations.

Security Incidents

Note: Hostile attacks are reported through USAID's security contractors and the Associated Press

- **Number of Hostile Attacks:** During this reporting period, there were nine hostile attacks resulting in four deaths and four injuries.
- **USAID Related:** During this reporting period, there were four hostile attacks directly affecting USAID related projects and/or staff. There were five other attacks against other aid agencies and NGOs.
- **Last Attacks:** On May 17 in Paktika, a shura member was killed by the Taliban, due to his involvement in the election process. On May 19 in Kabul, a female reporter working for TOLO TV, an USAID-supported Afghan TV station, was killed. A high school in Kandahar was set on fire on May 23, with the perpetrators warning Afghans of future consequences should they continue to aid the government. On May 19, in Kunar province the Asadabad PRT sustained a small arms attack.



Many buildings were damaged in the nationwide demonstrations connected to the Newsweek article, including the Jalalabad Women's Center.

